

Catholicism and Party Affiliation

An Honors Thesis (POLS 404)

By

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Pamela Schaal". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed name of the thesis advisor.

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Abstract

Catholics have lived in the United States since colonial times and have become increasingly important culturally and politically throughout the nation's history. Catholics were primarily constituents of the Democratic Party throughout the 19th Century but this affiliation fell apart after World War II. Today, Catholics are nearly evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. This paper addresses the question, what is the impact of Catholicism on party affiliation? Using data from the University of Chicago's General Social Survey, statistical analyses are performed to answer this question. The paper comes to the conclusion that Catholicism is not a statistically significant factor to party affiliation and that socio-economic factors are more relevant to political identity.

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Policy:

Catholics have lived in the United States since colonial times, but their small numbers prevented them from being politically influential early in the nation's history. They were initially shunned by the Protestant establishment in the colonial governments due to centuries old resentments. The First Continental Congress decried the Quebec Act for establishing "the Roman Catholick religion throughout those vast regions, that border on the westerly and northerly boundaries of free protestant English settlements," (Hennesey 1981, p. 57). Prominent patriot Samuel Adams went as far as to deny Catholics the right to vote in the new republic.

One patriot voice, however, helped ensure Catholic political rights in the United States. Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a Maryland Catholic, became a powerful voice for the American cause in the Southern colonies. He was elected to the Second Continental Congress and was the only Catholic signatory to the Declaration of Independence. For Carroll, independence was a religious cause as well as a political one. His stated goal was "the toleration of all sects, professing the Christian religion and communicating to them all great rights," (Hennesey 1981, p. 59). Carroll's efforts were ultimately successful. The Federal Constitution and subsequent Bill of Rights guaranteed freedom of religion, ensuring Catholics a voice in the newly established government of the United States. Despite this, Catholics remained a small minority of the American population and were inconsequential to national politics for the remainder of the 18th Century (Silk, 2008).

The expansion of popular democracy in the Jackson era coincided with the beginning of a huge swell of Catholic immigrants from Northern and Western Europe. These immigrants were of mostly Irish and German heritage (Marty, 1995). The Irish who

settled in the cities of the East Coast found themselves at odds with the Anglo-Protestant elite. These wealthy, urban elites tended to belong to the Whig Party of Henry Clay (Watson, 1990). This discrimination, along with the ideals of Jacksonian democracy, helped to form a strong and lasting alliance between American Catholics and the Democratic Party. The Democrats were on the whole more supportive of immigration than the Whigs. The Democrats were also supportive of public funding for Catholic schools (Silk, 2008). Some Catholics became prominent in the Democratic Party, most notably Roger Taney, whom Andrew Jackson appointed as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1836 (Marty, 1995).

The anti-Catholic movement in the United States reached its zenith in 1843 with the formation of the American Party, commonly called the "Know-Nothing" Party. This nativist party was committed to disenfranchising Catholics. The party quickly gained control of the legislatures of New York and Philadelphia, cities that were homes of large Catholic communities. Confrontations between the Know-Nothings and Catholics turned violent, culminating in a deadly riot in Louisville in 1855 (Hennesey, 1981). The activities of the Know-Nothing Party further drove Catholic voters toward the Democrats. Once again rejected by the Protestant establishment, Catholics turned to the Democrats out of necessity (Silk, 2008). The Know-Nothings never gained national power. They ended up joining the Constitutional Union Party in 1860 and vanished completely after the Civil War. Anti-Catholic sentiment continued after the war, but not in the politically organized state it had been (Hennesey, 1981).

Signs indicated that by the late 19th Century, Catholics were finally becoming an accepted and important factor in American politics. Several Catholic politicians rose to prominence in the East Coast establishment. Charles O'Connor of New York was a major

contender for the Democratic nomination for president in 1872. William R. Grace was elected the first Catholic mayor of New York and received the Statue of Liberty from France (Hennesey, 1981). The Catholic vote played a tremendous role in the outcome of the presidential election of 1884. A supporter of Republican candidate James G. Blaine decried the Democrats as the party of "rum, Romanism, and rebellion," (Hennesey, 1981, p. 182). This statement alienated Irish Catholic voters, costing Blaine New York and giving the election to Grover Cleveland.

The aftermath of the Industrial Revolution also strengthened the ties between American Catholics and the Democratic Party. The immigrant Catholic population was largely urban and found work in the factories of America's growing industrial centers. It was natural that these workers would form a crucial part of the labor movement. Middle and upper class Protestants decried efforts to unionize, and these factions found a voice in the Republican Party (Silk, 2008). The lower class Catholics, on the other hand, needed to unionize if they had any hope of avoiding financial ruin.

In 1869, the Knights of Labor, the first national labor group in the United States, was founded. One of its influential early leaders was Catholic Terrence Powderly, and many members of the Knights were Catholic as well. The strong Catholic presence in the organization prevented the labor movement from taking a Marxist turn as it had in Europe. They were naturally suspicious of Marxism, an ideology that was inherently anti-Catholic and that had been denounced by Church leaders (Marty, 1995). The Democratic Party was sympathetic to the plight of organized labor. With labor's opponents lining up in the Republican field, it was natural that the growing number of Catholics in labor unions would turn to the Democrats for a voice in politics (Silk, 2008).

Official support for the position many Catholics had adopted in the United States came in the form of Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. The encyclical was a surprisingly progressive statement from what is normally viewed as a conservative institution. Pope Leo sympathized with the working class and staunchly supported labor's right to organize. While decrying the dehumanizing effects of unbridled capitalism, the pope also condemned Marxist theories of class struggle and materialism as contrary to natural law. He called for a middle ground between capitalism and socialism that upheld the right to private property while also allowing the state to engage in distributive justice (Warner, 1995).

The ideals of *Rerum Novarum* fit right in with the progressive ideals of the early 20th Century. The conjunction of Catholicism and progressivism is best exemplified in the career of Father John A. Ryan of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). He supported the idea of a living wage, a precursor of the minimum wage, and even openly supported progressive political candidates (Warner, 1995). He also supported the break up and regulation of monopolies, as well as equal pay for women and the abolition of child labor (Hennesey, 1981). Though often decried as a socialist, Ryan's progressive ideology actually stemmed from his conviction that creating a just economy would help lead to the salvation of souls. Ryan's views would become influential and he himself would be a prominent Catholic voice in U.S. politics for decades to come (Warner, 1995).

In 1924, the alliance between Catholics and Democrats was confirmed with the nomination of Al Smith, the Catholic Governor of New York, as the Democratic candidate for President of the United States. This was the first time a Catholic had appeared as a presidential candidate for one of the major parties. Smith had to fight an uphill battle,

contending with a popular incumbent Republican Party and dealing with centuries of anti-Catholic prejudice. Smith publicly stated that his religion would not interfere with the American tradition of separation of church and state. His reassurances did little to win over Protestant voters, and the Republican candidate Herbert Hoover won the election in a landslide. The United States was not yet ready for a Catholic president (Hennesey, 1981).

Although the Democrats failed in 1928, Catholic voters formed an integral part of the New Deal coalition that carried Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency in 1932. Roosevelt was decisively pro-union, so he easily gained the support of the Catholics in the labor movement. He was also pro-immigrant and appointed a number of ethnic and religious minorities to key positions in his administration. FDR's policies were very much in tune with the ideas promoted by progressive Catholics decades earlier, and he even quoted from the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (Warner, 1995).

The aging Father Ryan was a huge proponent of FDR, seeing in the president the fulfillment of his lifelong progressive crusade. He was a staunch supporter of Roosevelt's New Deal, including controversial programs such as the National Recovery Administration. Ryan all but endorsed FDR's reelection bid in 1936 and gave the blessing at the president's inauguration the following year. Ryan's partisanship proved too much for his superiors to handle, however, and Bishop Michael J. Ready banned members of the NCWC from participating in the 1940 presidential campaign (Warner, 1995).

Another powerful Catholic voice in the New Deal era came in the form of Father John Coughlin, a well-known radio personality. Similar to Ryan, Father Coughlin began as a proponent of the New Deal, going so far as to call it "Christ's deal" (Burns, 2001 p. 294). As time went on, Coughlin decided Roosevelt's policies were not radical enough. Coughlin

became a critic of the New Deal, calling for a radical populism that included a nationalization of certain industries and increased protections for organized labor. Coughlin's attacks became increasingly bitter and hateful, and he slowly lost his audience (Burns, 2001).

The immemorial league between Catholics and the Democrats began to fall apart in the years following World War II. There were two chief reasons for this. The first was the Cold War and the growing anti-communist sentiment in the United States. The Catholic Church had been opposed to communism since Marx first appeared on the scene in the 19th Century. It made sense that the Church's adherents in the United States would become swept up in the fervor of the Red Scare. Catholic politicians rose to prominence in the Republican Party, including Senator Joseph McCarthy (Warner, 1995). Another reason was the departure of large numbers of Catholics from their traditional home in the cities. Ties that had held the old Catholic communities together fell apart and the newly suburban, middle class Catholics became increasingly affiliated with the Republican Party (Silk, 2008). A majority of Catholics voted for Democrat Adlai Stevenson in 1952, but in 1956 Catholics gave him 51% of their vote, in comparison to 49% for Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower (*Presidential Votes of Catholics*, 2008).

Catholic voters joined the Democrats one final time in 1960 in order to elect Irish Catholic Senator John F. Kennedy to the presidency. Like Al Smith before him, Kennedy had to deal with the lingering anti-Catholic sentiment in America's Protestant communities. Kennedy tackled these prejudices head-on. In a speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Kennedy affirmed his commitment to the American policy of separation of church and state. He expressed his willingness to part with the Church on certain issues

and assured voters he would not let his religion influence his politics. He said, "I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president who happens to also be a Catholic," (*Transcript*, 2007, p. 1). Kennedy's words and youthful charisma carried the day. In a close election, he won with 49.7% of the popular vote. However, 82% of Catholic voters cast their ballots for their co-religionist (*Presidential Votes of Catholics*, 2008). In 1961, John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the first, and so far only, Catholic President of the United States.

Following 1960, Catholic voters came to reflect the United States electorate as a whole. Large numbers still voted Democrat, but equal numbers voted for Republicans. In 1972, Catholics for the first time gave a majority (52%) of their vote to a Republican candidate, Richard Nixon (*Presidential Votes of Catholics*, 2008). Factors were increasingly driving Catholics to the right. Also in 1972, the Supreme Court handed down *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion across the country. This sparked outrage among Catholics, who were traditionally opposed to abortion, and many grassroots groups formed to have the decision overturned. The Democratic Party and American liberalism in general became increasingly associated with the sexual revolution, abortion, and gay marriage in the eyes of many Catholics. This caused them to turn to the Republican Party in order to protect their traditional values (Marty, 1995). Catholics were prominent in the conservative ascendancy of the 1980s and '90s, including Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

While many traditional Catholics were moving to the right, others used the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II as cause to rededicate themselves to liberalism. Many Catholic lay people openly rejected Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which called for a ban on artificial birth control (Weaver, 1999). These Catholics respectfully dissented

from Church teachings in other areas such as gay marriage and abortion. Further complicating matters was a new round of Catholic immigration from Latin America. Like their European forerunners in the previous century, these immigrants were often lower class and identified with the Democratic Party (Silk, 2008).

The result of these developments was a Catholic Church in the United States divided along liberal and conservative lines. There was no longer a unified Catholic vote. Instead, Catholics became a microcosm of the nation as a whole for the rest of the 20th Century. They were nearly evenly split between Democrats and Republicans and usually voted for the winning presidential candidate. One indicator of how Catholics will vote is how often they attend church. Those who regularly attend Mass are more likely to identify as conservative, while those who rarely attend are usually liberal (Silk, 2008).

In 2004, the Democrats ran their third Catholic presidential candidate, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry. Though Kerry is a lifelong Catholic, he gained the ire of conservative Catholics and certain bishops due to his pro-choice opinions. To many of the faithful, Kerry was a “cafeteria Catholic”, someone who called himself Catholic but substituted many Church teachings with his personal beliefs (Caldwell, 2004). As a result of Kerry’s unorthodox opinions, Catholics did not side with him as they did with Kennedy in 1960. 52% of Catholics voted for the Republican incumbent, George W. Bush. In addition to the abortion issue, these voters supported Bush for his opposition to gay marriage and support of the death penalty (Silk, 2008).

The nation swung back to the left in 2006, and Catholic voters swung with it. The Democrats regained control of Congress that year and Nancy Pelosi, a Catholic Representative from California, became Speaker of the House. Conservatives failed to

replicate their success with Catholics in 2008, and that year Barack Obama won the presidency with 54% of the Catholic vote (*Presidential Votes of Catholics*, 2008). His running mate, Senator Joe Biden of Delaware, became the first Catholic Vice President. The Republicans took back the House of Representatives in 2010 and John Boehner, a Catholic Representative from Ohio, was elevated to Speaker. 2012 was another landmark election for Catholics, with both major parties offering a Catholic candidate for Vice President. The pro-choice Biden fell into the liberal camp, while his Republican challenger Paul Ryan represented the traditional strain of Catholicism that had become powerful in rightwing politics (Madrid, 2012). Catholic voters once again sided with the nation as a whole and gave a majority of their vote to President Obama in 2012. Protests from bishops against Obama's policies have done little to sway their constituents.

Catholics have become increasingly divided over the past 50 years, with nearly equal numbers supporting the Democrats and the Republicans. This leads to the question this paper will seek to answer: Does Catholicism (independent variable) determine party affiliation (dependent variable)?

Literature Review:

There are studies that indicate that a positive relationship does exist between Catholicism and party affiliation. These studies assert that social issues, often informed by religion, are important to Catholic voters. They also find a significant relationship between religiosity and politics, with church-going Catholics more likely to be conservative. Overall, they posit that economic factors are of less importance than religious ones to Catholic voters.

In his 1986 study, "Changing Partisanship and Issue Stands among American Catholics", James M. Penning argues that a significant relationship does exist between Catholicism and party affiliation. He notes the historical identification of most Catholic voters with the Democratic Party, but observes that this union has fallen apart in recent decades. He tests the political affiliations of white Catholic voters in relation to other variables such as ethnicity and suburbanization. His study comes to the conclusion that Catholic voters have become more conservative, but are overall political moderates. He also asserts that variables such as rising social class and suburbanization are of relatively little consequence to Catholic voting patterns.

Catholicism itself has a strong relation to ideology and "a relatively large and apparently growing impact on party affiliation," (Penning 1986, p. 46). The study also notes a significant relationship between the religiosity of Catholic voters and their political ideologies and affiliations. Catholics who were reportedly "very strong" in their faith were more likely to identify with a political party, either Democrats or Republicans depending on the time period, and were more likely to be conservative. Less strong Catholics were more likely to be independent and liberal.

The 1989 study "Religious Roots of Political Orientations: Variations Among American Catholic Parishioners" by David C. Legee and Michael R. Welch came to a similar conclusion. It asserts that "foundational beliefs", that is, religious principles that individuals use to guide their lives, have a strong impact on the political ideologies of Catholics, as well as other people of faith. The study also notes that the rising social status of American Catholics should lead to a stronger affiliation with the Republican Party, but such a mass shift has not taken place. Religious attitudes were more important than factors such as

income to determining political affiliations. While controlling for factors such as education and income, the study addresses the impact of these foundational beliefs, particularly in relation to religious individualism or communalism. It asserts that the way Catholics interpret their religion influences their political ideology, at least on private issues. Their religiosity led to predictable differences in their opinions on certain policies, such as access to abortion and the role of women. The impact of religion was less substantial on public issues such as nuclear disarmament. The foundational beliefs had a greater impact on personal attitudes than public policy positions. However, with the growing impact of social issues, these attitudes remained relevant to political ideology and were a strong indicator of liberalism or conservatism.

A more recent study, "Camelot Comes Only but Once? John F. Kerry and the Catholic Vote" by Mark M. Gray et al., lends further support to the notion that Catholicism can impact the party with which a voter identifies. The study observes the declining support for the Democratic Party among Catholics in the later half of the 20th Century. Catholics who regularly attended Mass and agreed with the Church's teachings on social issues such as abortion and gay marriage were more likely to lend their support to the Republican Party. The study also notes a correlation between the positions of Catholic bishops and the votes of their constituents in 2004. Many bishops stated that they would deny John Kerry communion because of his pro-choice views. "Overall, fifteen bishops in fourteen states made such statements between November 2003 and the election. Within those states, Kerry won only 44% of the vote," (Gray 2006, p. 6). However, the study also states that Kerry's Catholicism did win some Catholic voters in 2004. 7% of Catholics who voted for Bush in 2000 voted for Kerry, while only 3% of Catholics who voted for Gore gave their

support to Bush in 2004. The study's multivariate analysis also indicated that Catholics were on the whole more likely to vote for Kerry than were non-Catholics. Catholics who regularly attended Mass, however, were more likely to vote for Bush. This conclusion agrees with the results of the previous studies that showed practicing Catholics were more likely to be conservative or Republican.

In contrast to these views, other studies assert that Catholicism is not a significant factor when determining a voter's party affiliation. Catholics are a large and diverse group with little consensus on social issues or public policy. Other factors, such as income and region, play a larger role than religion when it comes to Catholic voting preferences.

John McGreevy adopts this position in his 2007 study, "Catholics, Democrats, and the GOP in contemporary America." He notes that although the Catholic Church formally denounces abortion and contraception as sinful, many Catholics simply ignore these bans. Not even the abortion issue, salient among Catholic voters, divides Catholics into clear Democratic and Republican camps. McGreevy notes Republican politicians such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Rudi Giuliani who adopted pro-choice stances in spite of their Catholicism. There have also been successful pro-life Democrats, such as Pennsylvania Catholic Robert Casey Jr., who defeated Rick Santorum in the 2006 Senate election. Since there is no clear consensus on Catholic voters on social issues and many openly defy the Church's prohibition on contraception, it seems Catholics vote on principles other than their religion. The declining number of vocations to the priesthood and sliding church-attendance across the country indicate that the power of the Catholic Church in United States politics will continue to remain minimal for the foreseeable future (McGreevy, 2007).

"The Political Behavior of American Catholics: An Assessment of the Impact of Group Integration vs. Group Identification", a 1988 study by James M. Penning, concurs with the conclusion that there are more important influences than Catholicism when it comes to party affiliation. Unlike in his previous study, Penning here takes an approach based on two theories: group integration, the extent to which cohesiveness of a group gives it influence; and group identification, which posits that being part of a group influences an individual's worldview. He found a statistically important relationship between group integration and church-attendance, with high church-attendance leading to strong affiliation with Catholicism. While this led to increased political participation, it had little relevance to which candidate Catholics voted for once they reached the polls. For example, Catholics with low church-attendance were more likely to vote for the Democrat Carter in 1976, but they went for the Republican Reagan in 1984. Penning suggests that other factors such as Reagan's personal appeal were important to these voters than religion. Group identification also proved closely related to church-attendance, but, like group integration, had little influence on party affiliation (Penning, 1988).

Group integration proved to be more statistically relevant than group identification, but neither proved to be a good indicator of which party a Catholic would choose to support. The study turns to other factors to determine this issue. It finds that party identification itself is the most important factor when determining how Catholics vote. Their political views come from their party rather than their church. Other factors, such as age and education, also ranked ahead of church-attendance in terms of importance for voting preferences. This leads to the conclusion that socio-economic factors are more important than religion to Catholics' political choices (Penning 1988).

David C. Leege argues in his 1988 study "Catholics and the Civic Order: Parish Participation, Politics, and Civic Participation" that non-religious factors are most important when it comes to a Catholic's party affiliation. He observes that Church teachings make it difficult to categorize Catholics as liberal and conservative. His data suggests that most Catholics favor gun control and nuclear disarmament, prominent liberal causes, while at the same time supporting conservative causes such as prayer in public schools and opposing increased rights for homosexuals. Leege posits, "differences in party identification among Catholic parishioners are primarily the result of ethnic assimilation, income, and political generation," (Leege 1988, p. 23). Catholics whose ancestors came from Northern Europe and are now culturally assimilated are more likely to identify with the Republican Party than less assimilated ethnic communities. Leege also found income and age to be relevant to political affiliation. Upper income Catholics are more likely to be conservative and younger Catholics tended to be more liberal and were less likely to affiliate with any party. The study found that religious factors such as perceptions of God and salvation and the role of community and the individual could influence political ideologies, but overall socio-economic factors were better indicators of party affiliation.

There are compelling arguments both for and against the position that Catholicism impacts party affiliation. The pro-arguments conclude that the Catholic faith can have a substantial impact on party affiliation, particularly when religiosity is taken into account. An individual's relationship to his or her Catholic faith can inform views on political issues such as abortion or social justice. The other studies assert that socio-economic factors are important than Catholicism when determining party affiliation. Catholics are a heavily divided group with diverse political leanings. Their differences in opinion are due to factors

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other than their faith. Which of these two views is correct will be the subject of the following investigation.

Methodology:

The data for this paper are taken from the General Social Survey (GSS) carried out by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (Smith, 2012). The GSS uses a full probability sample based on block quotas that have been stratified for race, age, and income. The surveys used will be from the years 2000 and 2004, the most recent presidential election years available in the data set. NORC took two samples in the years 2000 and 2004, with the target size for each sample being 1500. The sample was selected from adults living in households throughout the United States. For the years 2000 and 2004, the sample was restricted to individuals who could complete the survey in English.

The data for the year 2000 were collected from NORC's nationwide samples from 1980 and 1990. These samples were conducted in three stages. In the first stage, NORC divided the United States into a number of Primary Sampling Units, identified as either metropolitan areas or non-metropolitan counties. The PSUs were then stratified by criteria such as region and percentage of minority residents. In 1980, PSUs were chosen based on control variables, while in 1990 a systematic selection was employed. In the second stage, the PSUs were divided based on blocks, which were sorted by location, census tract, and minority population. Housing units were then systematically selected from these blocks. Individuals from these housing units served as the respondents of the GSS (Smith, 2012).

NORC introduced a new sampling design in 2004, which used a list-assisted frame that accounted for 72% of the population. This list is based off data from the United States Postal Service and the Census Bureau, giving it a greater degree of accuracy than more

traditional methods. The new design uses census tracts as the PSU instead of the block system from older samples. Sample frame areas were divided into three sections: Metropolitan Standard Areas, non-metropolitan counties, or areas with a mixture of both. The result is a hybrid system in which housing units from the MSAs can be selected directly from the list, while housing units from the other two categories are selected using traditional fieldwork. To adjust for the effects of the change in selection process, a weight variable will be used for the tests conducted in 2004, as suggested by the GSS codebook (Smith, 2012).

Having two separate years will illustrate whether trends remain consistent over time. It is useful to compare these two because the same candidate, George W. Bush, ran in both elections, and a Catholic candidate, John Kerry, appeared on the ballot in 2004. Data from these years is also more recent than the data from most of the previously cited studies. The data will be subject to regression analysis run through SPSS. Regression analysis measures the strength of a relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables.

The dependent variable for the experiment will be party affiliation and the independent variable will be Catholicism. Since GSS has no specific Catholic variable, a new dummy variable was recoded from the existing religion variable. Catholicism was recoded as 1 and all other religions were recoded as 0. Party affiliation is measured on a scale from strong Democrat to strong Republican with options for Independent or other party. The party affiliation of Catholics will first be compared with the party affiliation of respondents to the survey as whole through linear regression analysis as an initial assessment of the religion's impact. Religiosity, defined as the level of a respondent's religious commitment,

will be taken into account in the next analysis, as suggested by Penning (1986) and Legee and Welch (1989). Religious commitment is measured in the GSS with the categories strong, not very strong, somewhat strong, and no religion. Finally, a multiple regression analysis will be conducted in which Catholicism will be cross-tabulated with several socio-economic control factors. These factors are age, ranging from 18 to 86 with a separate category for over 86, sex, defined as male or female, race, which included 16 categories in 2000 and 2004, and income, separated into 24 categories ranging from under \$1000 to \$110,000 and over. This analysis will determine if Catholicism has a significant impact on party affiliation in comparison to these variables.

Findings:

Table 1A: Overall Party Affiliation (2000)

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
STRONG DEMOCRAT	14.7	14.8	14.8
NOT STR DEMOCRAT	18.0	18.1	32.8
IND,NEAR DEM	11.5	11.6	44.4
INDEPENDENT	20.1	20.2	64.6
IND,NEAR REP	9.3	9.3	73.9
NOT STR	14.2	14.2	88.1
REPUBLICAN			
STRONG	10.1	10.2	98.3
REPUBLICAN			
OTHER PARTY	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	99.6	100.0	
Missing NA	.4		
Total	100.0		

Table 1B: Overall Party Affiliation (2004)

		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	STRONG DEMOCRAT	16.2	16.3	16.3
	NOT STR DEMOCRAT	17.9	18.0	34.3
	IND,NEAR DEM	10.0	10.0	44.3
	INDEPENDENT	16.7	16.8	61.1
	IND,NEAR REP	8.5	8.5	69.6
Valid	NOT STR REPUBLICAN	15.1	15.2	84.8
	STRONG REPUBLICAN	14.1	14.1	99.0
	OTHER PARTY	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	99.6	100.0	
Missing	NA	.4		
Total		100.0		

Respondents to the GSS were generally evenly distributed among the major parties in the year 2000. A plurality of respondents (40.9%) identified as independents, although over a fourth of those considered themselves ideologically close to the Democratic Party. Also that year, more respondents identified with the Democrats (32.7%) than with the Republicans (24.2%). These trends remained mostly consistent for the year 2004, but that year saw a greater shift toward the two major parties. Independent continued to be the most popular category, although its share had dropped to 35.2%. The loss of Independents seems to have primarily benefitted the Republican Party, which in 2004 encompassed 29.2% of the sample. Despite this development, the Democrats remained the larger party represented in the sample and also increased its share to 34.1%. Other parties accounted for less than 2% of the sample in both years, and, similar to the independents, experienced decline from 2000 to 2004.

Table 2A: Catholicism Party Affiliation Crosstabulation (2000)

		Not Catholic	Catholic	Total
POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION	STRONG DEMOCRAT	15.0%	14.0%	14.8%
	NOT STR DEMOCRAT	16.9%	21.9%	18.1%
	IND, NEAR DEM	12.0%	10.2%	11.6%
	INDEPENDENT	20.1%	20.4%	20.2%
	IND, NEAR REP	9.2%	9.7%	9.3%
	NOT STR REPUBLICAN	14.5%	13.4%	14.2%
	STRONG REPUBLICAN	10.7%	8.6%	10.2%
	OTHER PARTY	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2B: Catholicism Party Affiliation Crosstabulation (2004)

		Not Catholic	Catholic	Total
POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION	STRONG DEMOCRAT	17.2%	13.2%	16.3%
	NOT STR DEMOCRAT	17.1%	21.0%	18.0%
	IND, NEAR DEM	10.0%	10.3%	10.0%

INDEPENDENT	16.6%	17.6%	16.8%
IND, NEAR REP	8.3%	9.2%	8.5%
NOT STR			
REPUBLICAN	15.0%	15.9%	15.2%
STRONG			
REPUBLICAN	14.7%	12.3%	14.1%
OTHER PARTY	1.2%	0.6%	1.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In the year 2000, Catholics also had a wide distribution among the political parties, but they were more likely than the population as a whole to identify as Democrats. 35.9% of Catholic respondents identified with the Democratic Party, while only 21% identified as Republicans. As was the case with the total sample, a plurality of Catholics identified as independents. These findings indicate that the Catholic population largely mirrors the electorate as a whole, although Catholics are slightly more likely to affiliate with the Democrats. Also similar to the main sample, an independent identification declined from 2000 to 2004, dropping from 40.3% to 37.1%. Again, this shift primarily benefitted the Republicans, who in 2004 accounted for 28.2% of Catholic respondents. The number of Catholic Democrats actually declined to 34.2%, despite the fact that the Democratic Party ran a Catholic presidential candidate that year.

Table 3A: Catholicism Regression (2000)

Independent Variable	Coefficient/Standard Error	Significance
Catholicism	-.127/.088	.149
R Square Overall	.001	

Table 3B: Religiosity Regression (2000)

Independent Variable	Coefficient/Standard Error	Significance
Catholicism	-.168/.091	.066
Strength of Affiliation	-.076/.038	.046
R Square Overall	.002	

Table 4A: Catholicism Regression (2004)

Independent Variable	Coefficient/Standard Error	Significance
Catholicism	-.046/.092	.614
R Square Overall	.000	

Table 4B: Religiosity Regression (2004)

Independent Variable	Coefficient/Standard Error	Significance
Catholicism	-.136/.093	.144
Strength of Affiliation	-.196/.039	.000
R Square Overall	.009	

A simple regression analysis for the year 2000 suggests that Catholicism is not an important factor when determining an individual's party affiliation. Its statistical significance is well above the .05 level. This result remained consistent for the year 2004, with Catholicism becoming even less significant than it had been in the previous election cycle. In contrast, religiosity was determined to be an influencing factor for party identity in 2000. The p-value was slightly below .05, indicating that religiosity was significant to determining party affiliation. These relationships remained consistent in 2004. Even when tested by itself, Catholicism was not determined to have a profound relationship to party affiliation. Religiosity was found to be highly significant to party affiliation in 2004, especially in comparison to the data from 2000. This indicates that individuals with stronger religious convictions are more likely to identify as Republicans than those with a weaker affiliation. However, the religiosity variable was not limited to Catholic respondents. People with stronger convictions were more likely to be Republican regardless of their specific religious affiliation.

Table 5A: Socio-Economic Controls Regression (2000)

Independent Variable	Coefficient/Standard Error	Significance
Catholicism	-.058/.159	.714
Age	-.002/.005	.693
Sex	-.396/.136	.004
Race	-.049/.021	.023
Income	.006/.013	.649
R Square Overall	.019	

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Table 5B: Socio-Economic Controls Regression (2004)

Independent Variable	Coefficient/Standard Error	Significance
Catholicism	-.012/.117	.917
Age	-.004/.004	.357
Sex	-.452/.104	.000
Race	-.068/.019	.000
Income	.035/.009	.000
R Square Overall	.033	

When controlled for socio-economic factors, Catholicism was found to be of even less significance. Of all the variables in the multivariate regression for both 2000 and 2004, Catholicism had the least impact on party affiliation. The socio-economic factors were of varying importance and their significance was markedly different between 2000 and 2004. Two of the variables, race and sex, proved to be statistically significant in 2000. Sex was the more significant of the two, with a p value of less than .01. The data told a different story in 2004. Catholicism remained the least significant when controlled for the other factors. Age also remained statistically negligible. The main difference for this year came with the importance of sex, race, and income. Income, which had not been a relevant factor in 2000, was found to be of incredibly high significance in 2004. Sex and race were found to be even more significant than they had been in 2000, with both variables, along with income, reaching the highest level of significance.

10/10/10

Conclusion:

These data indicate that Catholicism is not a statistically important factor when determining an individual's party affiliation. These findings agree with the results of the studies by Legee (1988) and Penning (1988), which suggested that factors such as age and income are more important than religion to determining a Catholic individual's party preference. The American electorate is heavily divided between the major parties, and Catholics reflect that division. Catholics are still more likely than the total electorate to be Democrats, but religion does not seem to be the primary cause of this affiliation. The dip in Catholic support for the Democrats from 2000 to 2004 may be attributable to Kerry's liberal stances on important Catholic issues such as abortion.

Religiosity was demonstrated to be a significant factor, as had been suggested in some of the cited studies, such as Penning (1986). Individuals with a greater religious commitment were more likely to identify as Republicans. While religiosity is significant to a Catholic's party affiliation, this result is not exclusive to Catholics. The increased significance of religiosity could stem from the importance of religion in the 2004 election. George W. Bush was an outspoken Christian known for his faith-based initiatives. His conservative positions on social issues gave him wide appeal to traditional Christians, including Catholics. Kerry, on the other hand, was viewed as a "cafeteria Catholic", a man who was inconsistent in his religious principles. His policy stances alienated traditional Catholics and drove them to the Republican camp in 2004.

Socio-economic factors were found to have the greatest impact on party affiliation. Sex and race were found to be statistically significant in 2000 and 2004, and income was also found to be relevant in 2004. The increased importance of income in 2004 is possibly

explained by Bush's economic policies, such as tax-cuts. Women and minorities were more likely to vote Democratic, as were individuals with lower income in 2004. That these variables were more important than Catholicism is indicative of the cultural assimilation Catholics have experienced in the preceding several decades. They are no longer a fringe group, but a part of the American political and cultural mainstream. As such, the old ethnic and religious ties that bound Catholics to a political party are no longer as prominent.

This paper ultimately agrees with the position of the literature that suggested that Catholicism is less significant to party affiliation than socio-economic factors. As stated earlier, Catholics have come to reflect the electorate as a whole, and no longer experience profound division and discrimination from non-Catholics. Future research in this field might include examining an exclusively Catholic population, as was done in the studies by Legee. This would allow for a more accurate measure of the value of religiosity to political affiliation. It might also be useful to examine Catholics from different region to determine if where they live is relevant to their religious and political values. Catholicism itself may not be a decisive factor to party affiliation, but Catholics remain an influential and dynamic group that will continue to impact American politics as they have for centuries.

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CATHOLICISM AND PARTY AFFILIATION

Ben Beuchel, POLS 404

EARLY CATHOLIC AFFILIATIONS

- ✖ Catholics arrived in the United States in large numbers in the early 19th Century
- ✖ Nativist sentiment from the Whigs helped form an alliance between Catholics and Democrats
- ✖ Catholics played decisive role in electing Democrat Grover Cleveland in 1884
- ✖ Democratic support for labor unions further strengthens ties

THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

- ✕ Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* endorses progressive ideals
 - + Minimum wage, abolition of child labor, distributive justice
- ✕ Father John Ryan was outspoken progressive, later endorsed FDR
- ✕ Al Smith was first Catholic candidate for president
- ✕ Catholics join FDR's New Deal coalition

POST WORLD WAR II

- ✖ Catholic-Democrat alliance falls apart after WWII
 - + Suburbanization, anti-communism
- ✖ John F. Kennedy becomes first Catholic president
- ✖ Majority of Catholics vote Republican in 1972
- ✖ Prominence of social issues drive many Catholics to the Republican Party in the 80s and 90s

THE 21ST CENTURY

- ✖ Catholics reflect electorate as a whole, evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans
- ✖ Catholic majority votes for Bush in 2004, despite John Kerry's Catholicism
- ✖ Catholics support Obama in 2008 and 2012
- ✖ Both parties offer Catholic vice presidential candidate in 2012

RESEARCH QUESTION

- ✖ What is the impact of Catholicism (IV) on party affiliation (DV)?

LITERATURE REVIEW: PRO ARGUMENT

- ✖ Penning (1986): rising social status and suburbanization have little impact for Catholic votes, religiosity is important determining factor
- ✖ Legee and Welch (1989): religious attitudes more important than socio-economic factors to determining ideology
- ✖ Gray (2006): States with bishops critical of Kerry were more likely to vote for Bush, church-going Catholics went Republican in 2004

LITERATURE REVIEW: CONTRA ARGUMENT

- ✖ McGreevy (2007): Many Catholics ignore Church teachings on social issues, prominent Catholics found in both parties
- ✖ Penning (1988): Church attendance was not helpful indicator of presidential vote, age and education are more important factors
- ✖ Leege (1988): Region and cultural assimilation important to Catholic voting patterns, age and income were also more relevant than religious issues

METHODS

- ✖ Data taken from the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center
- ✖ Data will be taken from surveys conducted in 2000 and 2004
- ✖ NORC took two samples those years, each from English-speaking adults living in households across the United States

METHODS

- ✖ 2000: Primary Sampling Units divided into metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas
 - + PSUs divided into blocks stratified by factors such as census tract and minority population, houses systematically selected
- ✖ 2004: New list-assisted frame accounts for 72% of population
 - + PSUs divided into metropolitan, non-metropolitan, or mixed areas
 - + Houses selected from list or by traditional fieldwork

METHODS

- ✖ Statistical analysis run through SPSS
- ✖ Cross tabulate Catholicism and party affiliation as initial measure of impact
 - + Dummy variable coded for Catholicism
- ✖ Regression analysis with party affiliation as the dependent variable, Catholicism as the independent
 - + Separate test for religiosity
 - + Control for age, race, sex, income in multivariate analysis

FINDINGS

CONCLUSION

- ✖ Catholicism has a negligible impact on party affiliation
- ✖ Religiosity was a relevant factor in 2004, possibly due to the different religious values espoused by the candidates
- ✖ Socio-economic values of race, sex, and income were found to be most important. This is indicative of Catholics' assimilation into the cultural mainstream

FUTURE WORK

- ✖ Examine an exclusively Catholic population, as Leege did in his studies
- ✖ Examine samples from different regions to determine if location impacts religious or political values